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reading farm family, in every library with a rural clientèle, and to be incorporated somewhere in the reading assignments of every young man and woman whose college course is supposed to fit them for a rural career.

Space does not permit the mention of more than a few of the many excellent suggestions developed in the course of the discussion. Drawing no doubt upon his own experience, the writer presents some stimulating and pertinent views upon the development of agricultural education, the proper field of government activity, the imperative call for self-help, and the proper relation between local efforts, state institutions, and federal support and control (see chaps. vii and xi). Likewise there are some pregnant words concerning the true nature of rural leadership and the duty of officials of farmers' organizations to "have the courage to tell the farmers at times that they are wrong in their attitude" (pp. 203 ff.).

In an Appendix prepared by Dr. Alexander E. Cance there is presented an outline sketch of a tentative agricultural policy for the United States and a "conference group" by which such a program might be formulated.

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*Principles of Government Purchasing.* By A. G. THOMAS (Institute for Government Research). New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1919. Pp. 275. \$2.25.

This book is a real contribution to public finance and administration. Basing his proposals upon a study of the purchasing systems of thirty large corporations and American municipalities, the author indicates in practical terms steps toward increased efficiency and economy through centralization of government purchasing.

Compared with the purchasing problem of some of our large industrial corporations, that of any particular city government is a simple one. Yet the decentralization of the purchasing function in governments and the maze of legal restrictions and red tape thrown about the purchasing process has resulted in anything but efficiency and economy. The danger of unfair and corrupt use of centralized power by the government purchasing officer should be guarded against by concentration of responsibility and the fullest light of publicity.

All of our large corporations recognize the value of centralization of purchasing. One of the forms of centralization used by corporations—

that of a central price-securing and price-agreement agency with decentralized issue of purchase orders—is applicable to all municipal governments. However, there is no reason why central purchasing for cities should not go beyond this and include issuance of purchase orders, follow-up, and checking of invoices. Of 113 cities investigated, 64 have centralized their purchasing in greater or less degree. Prominent among these is New York City.

In the second part of this work the author has presented the practical principles and technical procedure for centralized government purchasing, by means of a detailed comparison and contrast of the purchasing methods of well-known American corporations, railroads, and important municipalities, including New York, Cleveland, Chicago, and Baltimore. The conclusions concerning the best methods and procedure are reached after a careful consideration in each case of the difference in purchasing for a corporation and purchasing for a municipality. Some of the subjects discussed are: determination of purchase requirements, current market conditions, elements essential to securing fullest competition, development of specifications, methods of inviting bids, form of purchase agreement, making awards, follow-up, inspection of goods, and handling invoices.

The Appendix to the book provides a detailed description of the purchasing systems of the General Electric Company and the New York Central Railroad. It also contains a specimen continuing agreement for city purchasing.

Information concerning the experience of European cities as to methods of purchasing, and contrasts of American methods with these European methods, would have been valuable additions to this study. On the whole, the author is a pioneer in his field, and the book will be appreciated both by the student and by the man of practical affairs in public finance and administration.

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